ONTARIO PARKS

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands

Background Information

Ontario

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Approval Statement

I am pleased to approve the Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park Background Information document as part of Stage 2 of the management planning process for the park. The information outlined in this document reflects the intent of Ontario Parks to protect the natural and cultural features of Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park, and maintain and develop high quality opportunities for outdoor recreation and heritage appreciation for both residents of Ontario and visitors to the province. Following public review of this document, draft policies will be refined and a management options document will be prepared for the park as Stage 3 of this management planning process.

Brian Pfrimmer
Central Zone Manager
Ontario Parks

April 19, 2006.
Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 The Purpose of a Management Plan 1

1.2 Ecological Integrity 2

2.0 THE PARK AND ITS REGION 2

2.1 The Region 2

2.2 Land Use 3

2.3 Population Centres 3

2.4 Access/Transportation Routes 3

2.5 Regional Setting 6

3.0 PLANNING AREA 6

3.1 Land Tenure 6

3.2 Existing Park Development 8

4.0 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS 11

4.1 Social Factors 11

4.2 Economic Factors 11

5.0 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES 11

5.1 Climate 11

5.2 Earth Science Features 12

5.2.1 Geology 12

5.2.2 Geomorphology 13

5.2.3 Soils 13

5.2.4 Watersheds 14

5.3 Life Science Features 14

5.3.1 Flora 15

5.3.2 Fauna 16

5.3.3 Significant Features 18

5.4 Cultural Resources 22

6.0 MARKET ANALYSIS 23

7.0 CONSTRAINTS AND CAPABILITIES 24

8.0 ISSUES 24

9.0 REFERENCES 26

List of Tables

Table 1 ~ Populations in Local Communities 3
Table 2 ~ Average Monthly Temperature and Precipitation for Minden (1887 & 2004) 12
Table 3 ~ Herpetiles found within QEW 16
Table 4 ~ Provincially Rare Bird Species in QEW 17
Table 5 ~ Mammals Identified in QEW 17

List of Figures

Figure 1 ~ Regional Context for Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands 4
Figure 2 ~ Park Boundary 5
Figure 3 ~ Significant Water Features 9
Figure 4 ~ Trails within the Park 10
Figure 5 ~ Bear Management Areas 19
Figure 6 ~ Trapping Areas 20
Figure 7 ~ Bait Fish Harvest Areas 21

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On July 16, 1999, the Ontario Government released the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* to guide the planning and management of Crown lands in central and parts of northern Ontario. A major part of the *Strategy* was government intent to establish 378 new protected areas. Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park (QEW) is part of this expansion of Ontario's protected system.

The park was formally regulated as Dalton Digby Wildlands Provincial Park (P34) on May 8, 2002. The interim name had been taken from two of the five townships the park is located in, but had no other particular significance. The park was renamed Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park on October 9, 2002 to commemorate her Majesty's Golden Jubilee visit to Ontario. The name was officially amended to Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park under Ontario Regulation 238/03 on June 28, 2003.

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Park is classed a natural environment park. Natural environment parks incorporate outstanding recreational landscapes with representative natural and historical features to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences (MNR, 1992). Activities permitted in this classification include back country travel and camping, car camping, hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, cross country skiing, picnicking, biking, and swimming. Consistent with the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, hunting, fishing and fur harvesting will be allowed to continue within this provincial park.

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Park is in Ecodistrict 5E-8. The 33,505 hectare park protects one of the most diverse and least disturbed natural areas in the ecodistrict. Currently there are no other protected areas in southern Ontario that are of this size and quality. The park is the second largest provincial park south of Algonquin Provincial Park, second to the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Provincial Park. Protection of QEW makes a significant contribution to the maintenance of the ecological health of Ecodistrict 5E-8 and all of Site Region 5.

Ontario Parks is a branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) that has been administering Ontario's provincial parks system since 1996. Ontario Parks plans, develops, and manages the provincial parks system. The goal of Ontario Parks is to ensure that Ontario's provincial parks protect significant natural, cultural, and recreational environments, while providing ample opportunities for visitors to participate in recreational activities.

1.1 The Purpose of a Management Plan

Ontario Parks prepares management plans for individual provincial parks to outline how it will protect, develop, manage, and operate those parks. Management plans show how individual parks will contribute to achieving the objectives of the provincial parks system, and set out policies that will maintain or enhance that contribution over a 20 year period. A management plan is reviewed or amended as needed to ensure the continuing relevance of the existing information, and to provide the flexibility to accommodate changes required by new circumstances affecting the park. Currently, an Interim Management Statement written in 2001 directs the custodial management of the QEW.

A provincial park management plan is now needed for QEW for the following reasons:

a) there is currently no management plan in place and the park is managed under an interim management statement;
b) the plan will ensure protection of significant natural, cultural, and recreational features;
c) the plan will establish and confirm the park's long-term direction, purpose and approach to the management of the park, and establish a baseline against which the impacts of management activities will be monitored; and
d) the plan will develop and outline possible partnership arrangements for the stewardship and management of the park.

The Background Information document is designed to provide a concise overview of the features of the park, profile the uses of the property, and summarize the issues to be addressed through the park management plan. This document will be shared with local First Nations, local lanndowners, stakeholders on the park mailing list (PM 11.02.02), and attendees at public meetings.

1.2 Ecological Integrity

The Ontario Government has introduced new legislation to ensure the permanent protection of provincial parks and conservation reserves. The new *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act* received first reading on October 25, 2005. When legislated, the Act will repeal the *Provincial Parks Act* and the *Wilderness Areas Act*, and will make complementary amendments to other acts.

The following excerpts from the draft legislation deal with ecological integrity, and will have a significant impact on the management planning of the park:

Planning and management principles

3. The following principles shall guide all aspects of the planning and management of Ontario's system of provincial parks and conservation reserves:

1. Maintenance of ecological integrity shall be the first priority and the restoration of ecological integrity shall be considered.

2. Opportunities for consultation shall be provided.

Ecological integrity

(2) Ecological integrity refers to a condition in which biotic and abiotic components of ecosystems and the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities are characteristic of their natural regions and rates of change and ecosystem processes are unimpeded.

Same

(3) For the purpose of subsection (2), ecological integrity includes, but is not limited to,

a. Healthy and viable populations of native species, including species at risk, and maintenance of the habitat on which the species depend; and

b. Levels of air and water quality consistent with protection of biodiversity and recreational enjoyment.

2.0 THE PARK AND ITS REGION

2.1 The Region

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park occupies most of the geographic Townships of Dalton and Digby in the geographic Townships of Dalton, Digby, Laxton and Longford, in the City of Kawartha Lakes; part of the geographic Township of Ryde in the Town of Gravenhurst, District Municipality of Muskoka; and parts of the geographic Townships of Anson and Lutterworth in the Municipal Township of Minden Hills, in the County of Haliburton. It is described as Parts 1 to 14 inclusive of the Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Park Plan filed with the Office of the Surveyor General of Ontario. The park falls within the boundaries of the Minden Area MNR Office in the Bancroft District and also within the Parry Sound MNR District, served by the Area Office at Bracebridge. The park lies completely within the Central Zone of Ontario Parks. Ontario Parks, Central Zone has taken the lead administrative role in the regulation and management of QEW.

The park is located in the center of a number of tourist attractions. The Trent-Severn Waterway, a major regional tourist attraction connecting the Bay of Quinte with Lake Simcoe and Lake

Couchiching, is located to the southwest of the park. Gravenhurst and the Muskoka Lakes region are to the northwest of the park. The eastern portion of the park is within the Haliburton Highlands of Haliburton County. These areas are popular tourist destinations; in 2003, 2,190,700 visitors traveled to the District Municipality of Muskoka (Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, 2005). The popularity of the surrounding municipalities ensures many opportunities for accommodations allowing for day-trips into the park.

There are a number of protected areas in the region (Figure 1). The nearest provincial park is Balsam Lake Provincial Park which is located along the Trent Severn Waterway. Other parks include Indian Point and Cameron Ranch to the south and Bigwind Lake to the north. Muldrew Barrens and Jevins and Silver Lake Conservation Reserves are located west of the park.

2.2 Land Use

The park boundaries do not follow natural landforms or features. Several areas within the park boundary are privately owned. Most of these lots are located along the shores of the largest lakes. The pattern of private land ownership in the area of the park has resulted in a very irregular pattern to the park boundaries. With the exception of the north boundary in Anson Township and some locations on Riley Lake, all the land surrounding the park is patented. See Figure 2 for the park boundaries.

2.3 Population Centres

The park is located 18 km southeast of Gravenhurst, 28 km north-east of Orillia, and 10 km west of Minden. Food, lodging, gas, and supplies are available at all localities. Limited services are also available in the village of Norland, three km south of the park (Figure 1). Although the population in the surrounding area is increasing, there were no significant changes in population growth over the last 10 years (Table 1). It is unlikely that any new communities will be established adjacent to the park in the near future.

Table 1 ~ Populations in Local Communities

	Population in 1996	Population in 2001	% change 1996 to 2001
Gravenhurst (Town of)	10,030	10,899	8.7
Minden Hills (Township)	5,336	5,312	-0.4
Dalton (Township (dissolved))	442	474	7.2
Lutterworth (Township (dissolved))	927	977	5.4
Orillia (City of)	27,846	29,121	4.6
Kawartha Lakes (City of)	67,926	69,926	1.8

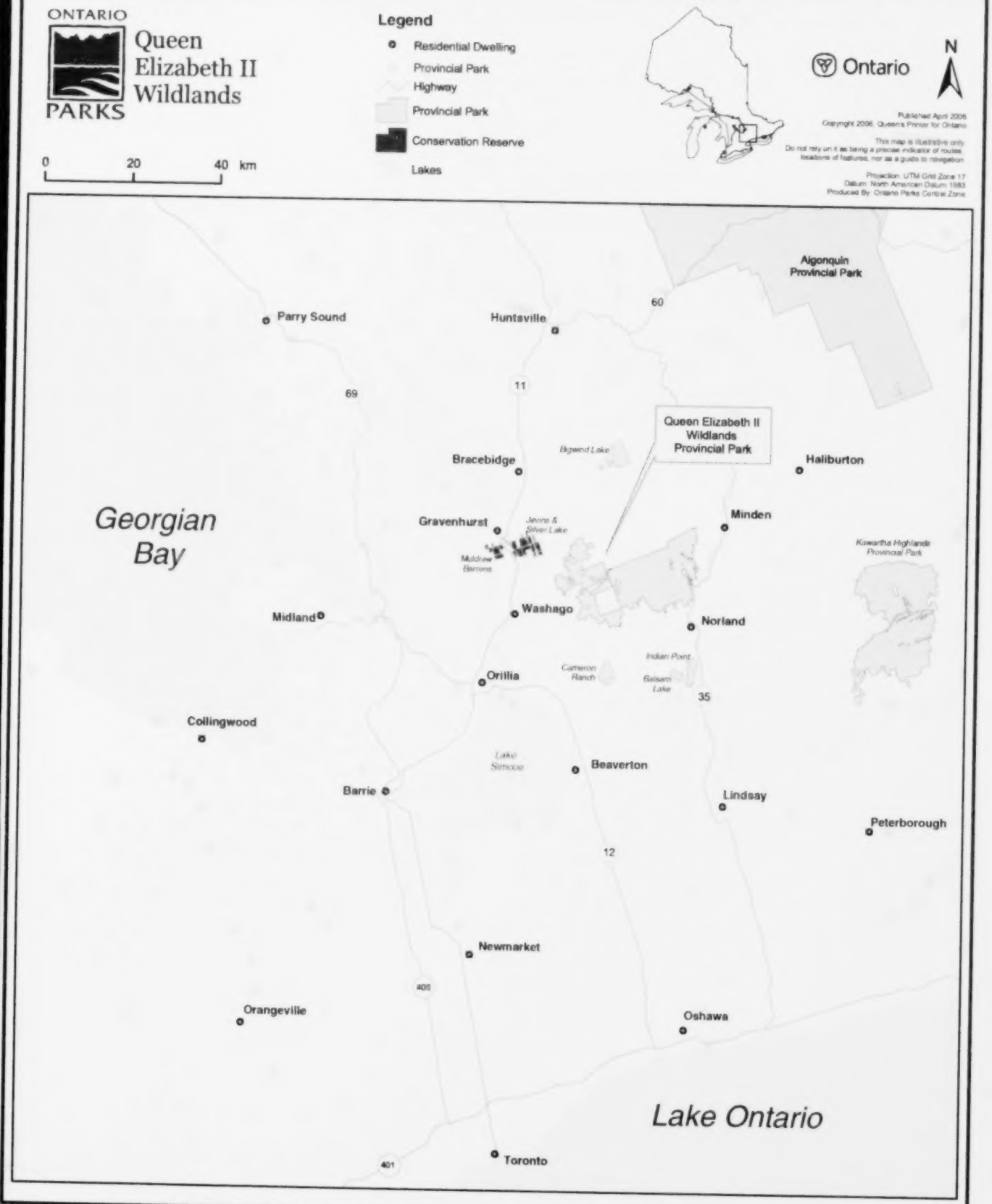
Source: Statistics Canada, 2004

2.4 Access/Transportation Routes

Access to the park area is limited. Main access routes are by Highway 35 from Lindsay and Peterborough to the southeast, and by the historic Monck Colonization Road (County Road 45) from Orillia to the west and by Highway 503/County Road 45 from Bancroft to the northeast. Highway 35 parallels the eastern boundary of the park. Highway 35 and Haliburton County Road 2 provide access to the eastern portion of the park. The Monck Colonization Road (County Road 45) runs parallel to the southern boundary of the park and provides limited access to the southern portion of the park.

There are numerous ATV trails and tertiary roads entering the park. Many of these roads and trails are unmapped and their condition is not known. Most are not passable by car.

FIGURE 1 REGIONAL CONTEXT



Some of the roads providing access into the park by car include sections of private roads. In Ryde Township the park can be reached from the north by car along the municipal roads of Barkway, Merkley and Lewisham And from the west by Westview Subdivision municipal road. Both Lewisham and Westview Roads are unpaved but are in good condition. The Westview Road eventually turns into a private cottage access road for Riley Lake. Numerous private roads cross the park from Housey's Rapids District Road 6 to Riley Lake as well. The Black River Road (District Road 6) is an unpaved municipal road which leads to Victoria Bridge at Victoria Falls. The road is closed during the winter as well as during the months of March and April to preserve the surface during spring melt. Montgomery Road, which runs south from Black River Road east of the bridge, is not passable by car and includes a make-shift bridge. Some of the larger lakes in or surrounded by the park such as Cranberry Lake, Black Lake, Little Gull Lake, Devil's Lake and Otter Lake are extensively developed with cottages but are accessible by private roads only. Devil's Lake has a public marine access point.

The Ganaraska Trail provides four points of access for hikers: Moore Falls, Devil's Lake, Victoria Bridge and Sadowa. From Sadowa the trails runs east to Victoria Bridge, then onto Otter Junction where it crosses the Black River, then travels along the northern portion of Digby Township passing Wolf, Victoria, and Loon Lakes. There is an intersection at Petticoat Junction. One arm of the trail travels southward paralleling the Digby/ Lutterworth Township boundaries (Haliburton and Victoria County boundaries) to Scrabble Mountain. The trail turns eastward passing around the east side of Black Lake, ending in Moore Falls. The other arm travels east, past Sheldon Lake and ends at Devils Lake (see Figure 4).

The park can also be accessed by air as many lakes are suitable for landing by float plane.

The park has one major canoe route which is accessible from the Black River. The Black River Canoe Route is described in several publications. It is a 21 km river trip that can be completed in two days, and is rated as intermediate with six undemanding portages around rapids or waterfalls. Canoeists access the route at Victoria Falls and end at the bridge crossing Highway 169.

2.5 Regional Setting

The park is located in parts of five different townships: Ryde, Dalton, Digby, Anson and Lutterworth. Ryde Townsnip is within the District Municipality of Muskoka, Dalton and Digby Townships are part of the City of Kawartha Lakes, and Anson and Lutterworth Townships fall within the County of Haliburton. The park's boundary is shown in Figure 2.

3.0 PLANNING AREA

3.1 Land Tenure

QEW is a 33,505 ha park created under Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy in 1999. The planning area includes all areas regulated under the *Provincial Parks Act* as Dalton Digby Wildlands Provincial Park as of May 8, 2002 (Ontario Regulation 147/02). The park was renamed and subsequently regulated as Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park as of June 9, 2003 (Ontario Regulation 238/03).

The irregular park boundary is completely surrounded by patented land with the exception of Anson Township and portions of Riley Lake in Ryde Township. Private lands encompassed by the park boundaries are not part of the park, and are not subject to the Provincial Parks Act. Unopened township road allowances and most of the 20 metre shoreline reserves around lakes were incorporated into the park when it was put into regulation under the Provincial Parks Act. Existing authorized access will continue to be permitted to private lands and recreational camps within and adjacent to the park.

In Lutterworth Township private land consists of scattered cottage lots along Devil's Lake, Little Gull Lake and Black Lake. A large contiguous block of private land surrounds Cranberry Lake in Dalton Township. Portions of four lots extend from this block into Digby Township. Also in Dalton Township numerous patented lots are located along the Black River south of Ragged Rapids. The following private concession lots, whole or in part, are encompassed by the park boundaries:

Township	Concession	Lots
Ryde	2	13-14
	5	15-16
	6	16
Dalton	4	5(NH)
	5	1-12
	6	1-12
	7	1-12, 17(NH)
	8	1-12
	9	1-11
	10	13
	11	6(NH), 7(NH), 8-14(NH)
	12	2, 7, 3-5(NH)
	13	9, 10(NH)
Digby	8	35
	9	35(SH), 36, 37(NH)
	10	33-34.

Within the regulated provincial park are 66 Land Use Permits (LUPs). The majority (58) are issued for recreation/hunting camps. The remainder of LUPs have been issued as follows: four for commercial outpost camps/fishing; two for roads, one for a boathouse, and one for a dock. An additional permit had also been granted for animal rearing/grazing, but this permit has since been cancelled. Over 62 cabins are within the park boundaries and are used primarily by hunters and anglers. Hunters also use "temporary" shelters that do not require permits; however, if the shelters are left up they do require permits. Temporary shelters are generally frame assemblies that remain throughout the year and are covered with tarps while in use during the hunting season.

Many campsites were recorded during field visits. The area surrounding Victoria Falls is popular and is heavily used by people on summer weekends. There are many campsites at the falls, as well as along Black River. Victoria Falls has been used for approximately 15-20 years as a camping location. Because of its heavy use (300-400 campers on a Victoria Day weekend) the area has been significantly impacted from overuse, litter, and vandalism. See Figure 3 for the location of Victoria Falls.

There are two hydro corridors that segment the park (Figure 2). One is on the northern border of QEW in Anson Township, but continues through Ryde Township and bisects the park. The second corridor, abandoned by Ontario Hydro, diagonally divides a portion of the park in Lutterworth Township and the southern portions of Dalton and Digby Townships.

There is a waste disposal site in Lutterworth Township on the eastern boundary of the park.

Three water control dams are situated In Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Park. The Digby Dam is located approximately 500 m upstream of Cranberry Lake on Lot 36, Con. 7, Digby Township. The dam is managed as a weir with a valve for drawdown. The Lutterworth Dam controls the waters of Lutterworth Lake (Devil's Lake, Lot 22, Con. 12, Lutterworth Township). This dam is used as a weir as well but with one stop log with a v-notch cut in the centre. One unauthorized dam has been built on the Head River upstream of Head Lake. The condition of this dam is unknown.

3.2 Existing Park Development

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park contains no developed services. There are, however, a number of trail systems that traverse the park as listed in Heidorn (2001). See Figure 4 for the approximate location of the trails.
The Ganaraska Hiking Trail extends from the Town of Port Hope on Lake Ontario north to Victoria Lake in QEW. The trail then travels in a south westerly direction, eventually reaching the village of Glen Huron in the Niagara Escarpment, south of the Blue Mountains. The portion of the trail within the park is called the Wilderness Section because of the challenging rugged terrain. This portion of the trail is 65 km in length and is suitable for experienced hikers and backpackers as it requires three to four days of backcountry travel and camping to complete. The following are hiking distances from the trail access points in or near the park:

- from Moore's Falls to Devil's Lake 19 km
- from Devil's Lake to Victoria Bridge 37 km
- from Victoria Bridge to Sadowa 20 km
- from Moore Falls to Sadowa 65 km
- from Moore Falls to Victoria Bridge 45 km.

(Taken from the Ganaraska Hiking Trail Guide – a Cross-country Hiking Trail from Port Hope to Glen Huron in the Province of Ontario)

The trail association uses campsites on Loon Lake and Montgomery Creek, and have an agreement with a fly-in fish camp south of Wolf Lake for the use of their camp when the camp is vacant.

Several snowmobile trails are located in the park. These are maintained by numerous clubs belonging to the Haliburton County Snowmobile Association, the Muskoka Snowmobile Region, and the Orillia and District Snowmobile Association. Trails within the park include the TOPS B trail, OFSC trail B104 and C103B. A scenic lookout and outhouse can be found along the trail at Scrabble Mountain.

In addition to the snowmobile trails, which are used by all-terrain vehicles (ATV) riders in the summer months, an extensive network of ATV trails also exists in QEW. These are used to access the area for hunting, fishing, trapping, recreation, and bait fishing. Most of these trails have not been mapped and their conditions are unknown. Known trails can be found near Black Lake Road, near Wolf Lake, on the west side of County Road 2 in Lutterworth Township, near Little Gull Lake, and west of Gull Lake near Deep Bay. ATV users also operate in the hydro corridors located in the park.

Four wheel drive road vehicles (4x4s) also utilize portions of trails in three areas of the park (Figure 4).

Several canoe routes pass through the park. The Black River Canoe Route, as mentioned in Section 3.1, is one of the routes. There is a campsite on the island upstream of Cooper's Falls and a portage over private land at Ragged Rapids, with the permission of the land owner. Other canoe routes include those between the lake chains; Cranberry River and Rainy Lake, Crooked Lake via Head River from Wolf Lake, and Scrabble, Clear and Coburn Lakes are linked by portages.

In addition to the campsites listed in Section 3.1, other campsites have been established on the interior lakes of QEW. There are sites on Rainy Lake, the east end of Smudge Lake, Wolfe Lake, Scrabble Lake and Red Boat Lake.

FIGURE 3 SIGNIFICANT WATER FEATURES

ONTARIO PARKS
Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands

Legend

- Falls
- Rapids
- Falls
- Rapids
- Primary Road
- Access Road
- Private Road
- River/Stream
- QEW II
- Township Boundary
- Lake
- Wetland
- Fen
- Marsh
- Swamp

0 3 6 km

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This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation.

Projection: UTM Grid Zone 16
Datum: North American Datum 1983
Base Derived From: NRVIS
Produced By: Ontario Parks Central Zone

FIGURE 2

PARK BOUNDARY

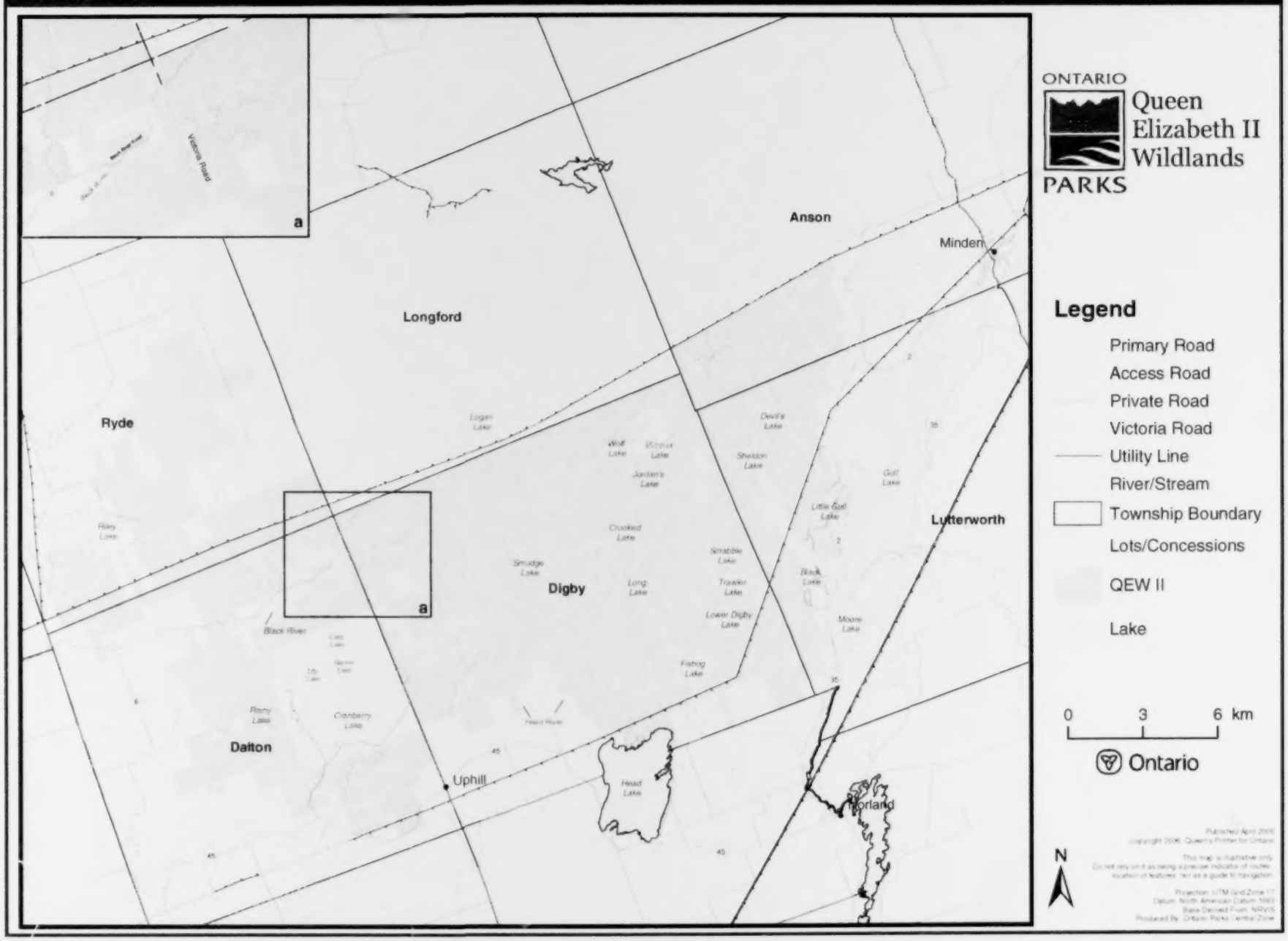


FIGURE 3 **SIGNIFICANT WATER FEATURES**

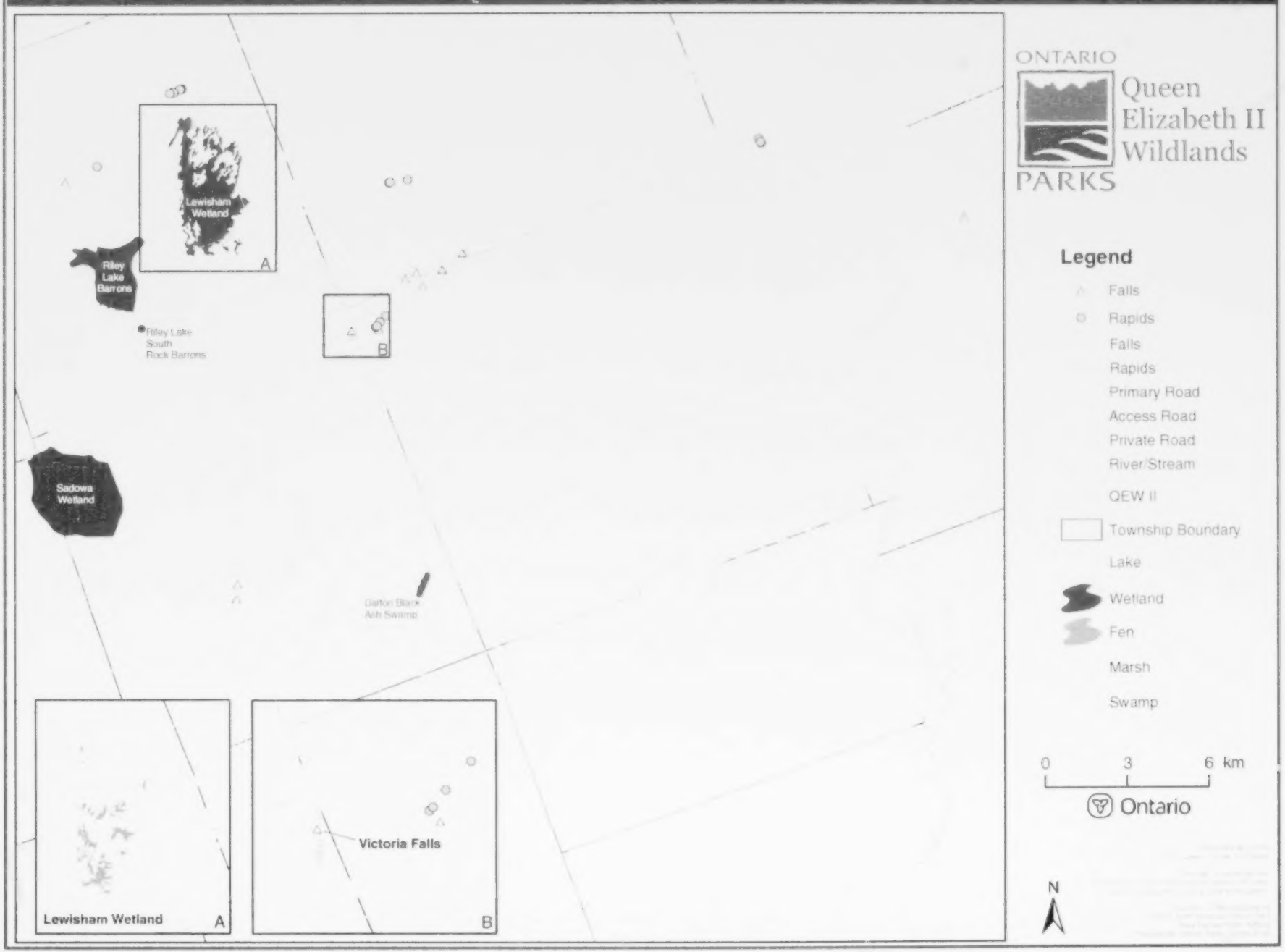
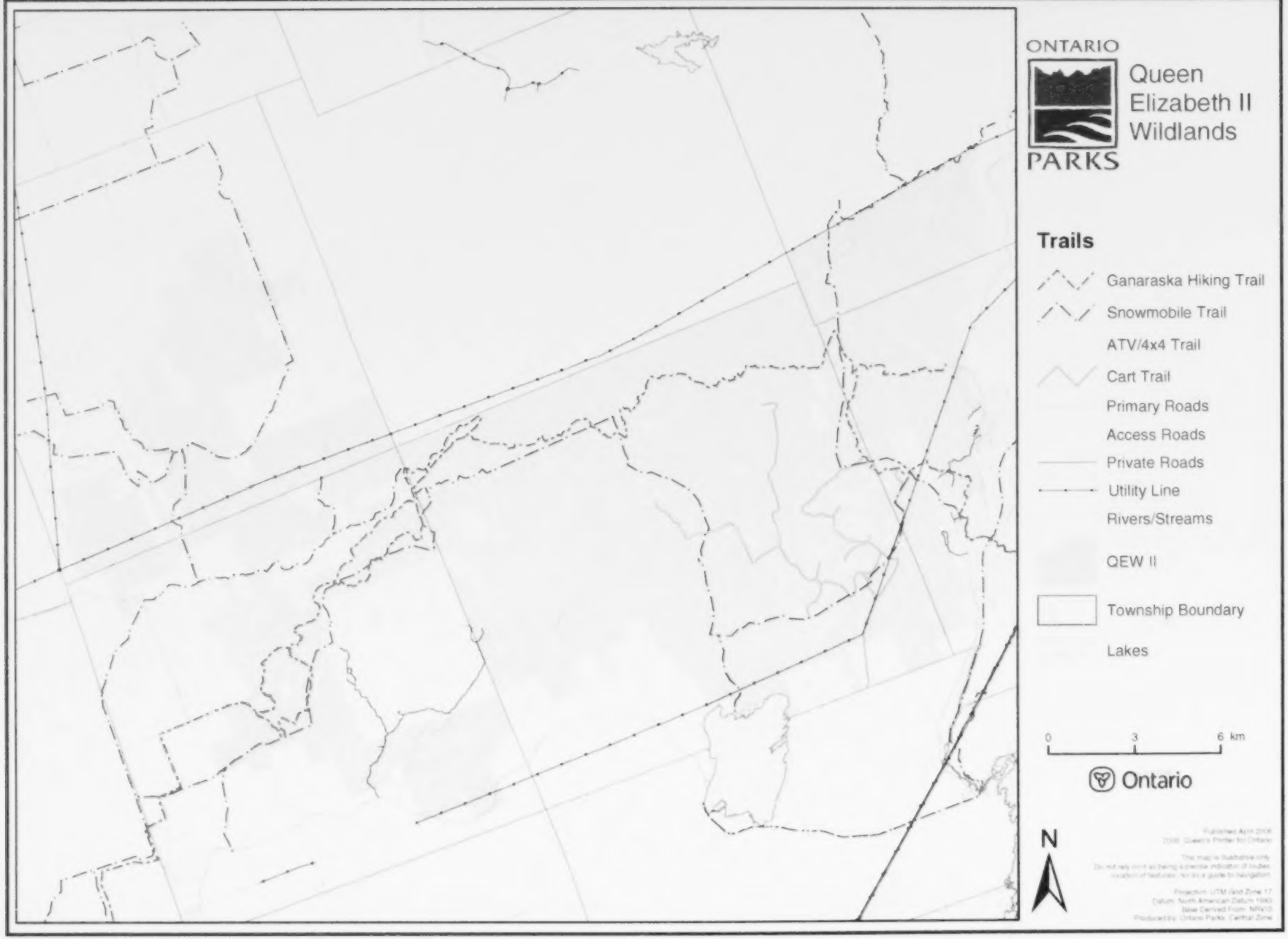


FIGURE 4

TRAILS



4.0 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

4.1 Social Factors

There are many benefits which provincial parks and protected areas provide to local communities, the province, and society in general that are not easily reported in economic terms. The following are a number of important benefits demonstrating the ways in which parks can improve our quality of life:

- protection and contribution to ecological functions (water protection, soil conservation);
- protection of resource integrity (some of the last green spaces left in the southern portion of the province);
- health effects from use of parks (mental, physical, spiritual benefits);
- worker productivity (healthy and happy workers tend to be more productive – a visit to a provincial park can contribute);
- education benefits (young and old learning about our natural environment, our role and relationship with it);
- scientific benefits (research in provincial parks);
- international responsibilities (to protect natural settings, features, and wildlife);
- last havens from development for species at risk; and
- business location decisions (quality of life/business) and community cohesion.

Communities with attractive waterfronts, low crime rates, varied recreational activities, and healthy environments are sought out by residents, businesses, and tourists. The recreation opportunities and scenery within the park help make the local communities attractive to a variety of groups, including families and retirees who are seasonal or permanent residents, businesses, and tourists.

4.2 Economic Factors

Economic impacts are measured based on expenditures, and are a way to track and demonstrate the flow of park and visitor expenditures in the economy. The economic impact from visitors has not been measured at QEW. However, indirect economic impacts or value-added costs associated with park uses in QEW include: fuel/transportation costs to access the park; food expenditures; and expenditures associated with recreational and interpretive activities at the park (i.e. camping equipment, binoculars, snowmobiles, equipment rentals, nature guides, etc.).

5.0 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park is the most diverse and least disturbed natural area in Ecodistrict 5E-8, containing more than 50 landform vegetation patterns. There has been limited or no recent history of logging in the area. It has mostly a low rolling topography which includes organic soils, flat sandy deposits, bare bedrock plain, and bare bedrock uplands with shallow soil patches.

5.1 Climate

Generally speaking, the park and surrounding area have a continental climate with relatively cool winters and warm summers. The following table is the summary of statistics gathered from the Minden data station for the years 1887 and 2004 (Table 2) (Location 44°55'-N 78°43'-W).

Table 2 ~ Average Monthly Temperature and Precipitation for Minden (1887 & 2004)

Month	1887 Mean Daily Temp. (°C)	1887 Mean Total Rainfall (mm)	1887 Mean Total Snowfall (cm)	2004 Mean Daily Temp. (°C)	2004 Mean Total Rainfall (mm)	2004 Mean Total Snowfall (cm)
Jan.	-14.5	44.7	61.7	-14.6	12.0	64.0
Feb.	-11.3	39.1	104.9	-7.1	trace	40.0
March	-8.1	12.7	52.8	-0.8	76.2	30.0
April	1.7	49.0	3.8	5.1	80.9	5.0
May	15.2	40.1	0.0	12.0	134.0	trace
June	17.8	42.2	0.0	15.4	87.4	0.0
July	21.2	45.5	0.0	19.2	176.6	0.0
Aug.	16.0	7.4	0.0	17.3	55.6	0.0
Sept.	10.5	23.1	0.0	15.8	45.2	0.0
Oct.	4.8	62.2	13.2	8.3	84.0	0.0
Nov.	-1.9	77.7	31.8	2.0	57.6	7.0
Dec.	-6.3	56.1	68.6	-7.7	48.2	88.0

Source: Environment Canada, 2005

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park receives approximately six months of snowfall. The length of the winter season is beneficial for outdoor winter activities, such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, or snowshoeing. All of these activities could potentially take place within the park. Summer temperatures are warm, allowing for participation in additional outdoor activities. Camping, hiking, canoeing, and nature appreciation are some of the activities which can occur in QEW. Overall, the temperature and weather patterns at QEW will allow for year round activity.

5.2 Earth Science Features

5.2.1 Geology

Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands is a large area of low, rolling topography with numerous elongated and curvilinear small lakes and extensive bedrock barrens (Frey & Duba, 2000). Bedrock outcrop is abundant throughout the sparsely forested barrens and more vegetated uplands. Gneiss bedrock ridges separate wetlands.

The bedrock in most of the park is in the south-eastern part of the Fishog Domain, Algonquin Terrane of the Central Gneiss Belt, in the Proterozoic Grenville Province. The dominant rock types are granitic to monzonitic gneisses; intermediate gneisses; migmatites and gneisses of indeterminate origin and younger pegmatites in the Fishog Domain. The eastern portion of the park contains disrupted felsic to mafic gneisses of the Central Metasedimentary Belt Boundary Zone.

The Quaternary and surficial geology of the park is well represented in other provincial parks in the region and are therefore considered of only local importance. The area of the park was prospected and evaluated for uranium and thorium deposits between 1950 and 1960 and then again in the early 1970s. Although two mineral showings were recorded in that period, no evidence of previous activity at those sites was found during site visits. There are no active mining claims within the boundaries of QEW.

Within the Ontario Parks system, the geology of QEW has regional to provincial significance in its extensive representation of several metaplutonic gneisses, typical of a large part of the Fishog Domain. The park also displays extensively other components of the Fishog Domain and the deformed gneisses in the Central Metasedimentary Belt Boundary Zone. Although resistant to most human activities, the bedrock exposures of the park are susceptible to graffiti, uncontrolled bedrock sampling and unplanned bedrock disturbances. Appropriate cautionary warnings or controls should be implemented if increased access is promoted.

5.2.2 Geomorphology

The altitude gradually increases from 275 m above sea level in the southern parts of the park to about 300 to 375 m in the north. In general, relief is more subdued in the areas underlain by granitic and monzonitic rocks in the Fishog subdomain. Relief is more pronounced along the Gull River valley and in the area underlain by the Denna Lake Structural Complex east of QEW. Most areas underlain by Paleozoic rocks and carbonate metasedimentary rocks have been cleared in the past for agriculture. The lowest areas in the park area are located along Head Lake and Head Creek, and along Gull River. The dips of most geologic units in the area are shallow, and hence the small differences in topography closely reflect rock type (Kretschmar, 2002).

The distribution of rock outcrop is variable. Bedrock exposures are abundant in the central and western parts of the map area which are underlain by granitoid and gneissic rocks; these rocks locally constitute up to 80 per cent of the total outcrop in any area. Less exposure is found in the eastern part of QEW. Large swamps are common along the Paleozoic-PreCambrian unconformity in the southern part of the map area. Many low outcrops are present in cultivated and open fields in the southern and eastern parts of the area, and human activity has in part prevented some of these outcrops from being overgrown. Glaciofluvial deposits are common along the Gull River System east of QEW and mantle older topography (Kretschmar, 2002)

An esker or drumlin complex is located approximately two km east of Victoria Lake. It is approximately four km in length and 300 metres in width (Easton, 1990, cited in Kretschmar, 2002).

5.2.3 Soils

Information for soils could only be located for the portions of the park in Dalton and Digby Townships. The majority of the park is considered Rock Land. Other significant soil series found in the park are Otonabee, Bondhead, Dummer, Atherly, Wendigo, Dalton, Farmington, Bottom Land, and Muck.

Otonabee soils were developed from calcareous sandy loam textured parent material. The soil is calcareous because it was derived mostly from limestone rock (Gillespie & Richards, 1957). Otonabee soils contain a moderate amount of stone. The type of Otonabee soil found within the park is loam which provides good drainage. This series of soil shows some of the characteristics of both the Brown Forest Great Soil Group and the Grey-Brown Podzolic soils (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Bondhead soils are well drained and have a moderately rolling topography. They develop from calcareous loam and sandy loam till. Trenton limestone is the principal source of calcareous materials in the soils. Bondhead soils are slightly alkaline and provide good drainage. The type of Bondhead soil located in the park is sandy loam. Soil development follows that of the Grey-Brown Podzolic soils (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Dummer loam in the shallow phase is another soil found at QEW. The parent material is calcareous gravely loam till. The well drained, alkaline soil has a relatively thin cover of till over bedrock. The shallow phase of Dummer loam has an undulating topography with slabs of bedrock jutting out of the soil at various angles. The Dummer series of soils are part of the Brown Forest soil group (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Developed from calcareous lacustrine clay, Atherly soils have a nearly level topography that is stone free. Clay loam, found in the park, is poorly drained and slightly acidic. Atherly soils are part of the Dark Grey Gleisolic soils (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Wendigo sands were developed from non-calcareous sandy soil from a glacial outwash. The topography of the Wendigo series is characteristically gently to moderately sloping. This soil has good drainage, is stone free, and is acidic. It belongs to the Podzol soil group (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Sandy loam from the Dalton series of soil is also within park boundaries. Originally, this type of soil was developed from sand over lacustrine clay. It is non-calcareous and has imperfect drainage. The topography associated with this soil is typically undulating. Sandy loam is stone free, acidic, and is derived from the Podzol soil group (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Farmington loam developed from shallow loam and clay loam till deposits over limestone rock. The soil layer itself is shallow; there is less than one foot (0.30 metres) of glacial till over the limestone bedrock. The topography is nearly level and the soil is moderately stony. It is alkaline. Farmington soils become saturated with water after heavy rains and are very dry in midsummer. This series of soil is a Brown Forest soil (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

Bottom Land is defined as the areas of land adjoining stream courses. It contains soils developed from recent alluvial materials. Bottom Land has variable drainage, surface reaction, texture, and depth. Theses areas are subject to flooding as the topography is nearly level (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

The last identified soil series in QEW is Muck. Muck is developed from decomposed organic materials. These organic deposits are found in old glacial spillway channels and other depressional areas. The drainage is very poor and the Muck is neutral. Muck contains 18 or more inches (0.46 or more metres) of organic material over-lying mineral soil. This soil series belongs to the Bog group of soils (Gillespie & Richards, 1957).

5.2.4 Watersheds

The park is dotted with a network of lakes and rivers. These can be divided into the following four main drainages or watersheds:

- The Black River drains large areas of Ryde Township including Riley Lake as well as portions of northern Dalton and Digby and a large area to the north of the park.
- Gull Lake and Gull River which includes Devil's, Sheldon, Cooney and Black Lakes.
- Cranberry Lake and Cranberry River which drains most of Dalton Township and westward into the central parts of Digby Township.
- Head Lake and Head River drains the majority of Digby Township including Victoria, North Fishog, and Fishog Lakes.

Most of the eastern third of QEW is drained by the Gull River system. The northern part of the area also drains into the Gull River system via Victoria, Sheldon, and Black Lakes. The western and central parts of QEW are drained into Head Creek via Smudge Lake, and into Head Lake and Head Creek via Crooked, Long and Fishog Lakes. Scrabble, Clear, Cranberry, and Red Boat Lakes also drains into Head Lake via Fishog Lake. Head Creek drains into Balsam Lake and from there into the Trent River system. The Gull River also drains south into the Trent River system. Kahshe Lake at the western boundary of the park drains westerly into the Severn River (Kretschmar, 2002).

5.3 Life Science Features

A Reconnaissance Life Science Inventory was completed of the Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park in 2000 (Korol, 2001). *A Detailed Life Science Inventory* was completed in 2003 (Korol, 2003) and should be referred to for detailed listing and descriptions of life science features.

To date 15 forest ecosite types, 11 forest understorey types and 61 non-forest ecosites have been identified during surveys. As of 2003, 583 vascular plant taxa, 25 herptile, 117 bird, 19 mammal, 29 butterfly and 34 dragonfly species have been found in the park (Korol, 2003).

5.3.1 Flora

Of the 25 forested ecosites found in central Ontario, 15 are present in the QEW. The dominant cover type classes found in the park are White Pine – Red Pine (ecosites 11 – 14), Tolerant – Mid Tolerant Hardwoods (ecosites 23-30) and Conifer – Hardwood Lowlands (ecosites 31-35).

The park area is dominated by low, rolling topography with organic soils, flat sandy deposits, bare bedrock plain and bare bedrock uplands with shallow soil pockets. Intolerant hardwood forests dominated by Trembling Aspen with an understorey of Eastern Bracken Fern are found in the shallow sandy upland areas near Lewisham Wetlands. Throughout the park rock barrens are covered with mixed stands of Red Oak and Eastern White Pine alternating with patches of predominantly Lichen with Poverty Oat Grass and Bristly Sarsaparilla.

Most of the forests identified in Anson Township have a significant amount of Eastern White Pine and/or Red Pine. Much of the habitat to the east of Snake Lake and along the hydro corridor is characterized by mixed stands of Eastern White and Red Pine with Largetooth Aspen, Trembling Aspen, and scattered Red Oak. The southwest shore of Snake Lake has an extensive stand of White Birch, with some Red Oak in upper slope positions. Sugar Maple is the leading species on the northern slopes of Anson Mountain with hardwoods dominating the view from its summit.

The White Pine-Largetooth Aspen-Red Oak ecosite type is the most common in Lutterworth Township. This ecosystem was identified east of West Lake and around Little Gull and Sheldon Lakes. Extensive areas with the Red Oak-Hardwood ecosite type are present along the Ganaraska Trail between Devil's and Sheldon Lakes. Much of the forest between Cooney Lake, Anson Mountain, and Sheldon Lake is dominated by Sugar Maple. The forests in this township are mostly mid to late-succession.

Many of the ecosites identified in Digby Township are pine dominated or pine mixed with varying amounts of Red Maple and Red Oak. Late succession pine stands were noted on all of the large islands on Scrabble and Clear Lakes, Smudge Lake and the south shore of Wolf Lake. Scattered, but dense, stands of Eastern White and Red Pine are also present north and east of Gold Creek. Mixed pine and hardwood stand types were noted on the north side of Head Lake, the eastern shores of Clear Lake and south of Cooney Lake. Hardwood stands in Digby Township were infrequently identified and were characterized by Red Oak and Sugar Maple. Such stands were found between Clear and Scrabble Lakes and on the north shore of Wolf Lake. Lowland forests dominated by Black Spruce and Black Ash characterize much of the landscape north of Head Lake and west of Fishog Lake.

The most productive forests in the park are found along the Black River Floodplain, in Dalton Township. Sugar Maple and White Birch are the dominant species here, but other species such as White Elm and American Basswood are also found. Stand ages were variable with some sites being dominated by "pole-sized" Sugar Maple and others with scattered, large-diameter Eastern White Pine. Elsewhere in the township the White Pine-Largetooth Aspen-Red Oak ecosite type was common in upland habitats and the Black Spruce-Tamarack ecosite type was present in several lowland areas.

Most of the forest stands identified in Ryde Township are dominated by coniferous species. Pine and mixed pine-oak ecosite types are the most common, but large areas with the Black Spruce-Tamarack type are also present, especially around Beatty's Lake. A mid-succession, intolerant hardwood stand is bisected by Lewisham Road.

Eleven forest understorey vegetation types have been identified in the park. Understorey communities were found across the full range of the edatopic grid (i.e. dry to wet, nutrient poor to rich), but most of the identified ecosystems were in dry to moist habitats with intermediate nutrient regimes. The 11 identified understorey types are: Black Ash-Hardwoods-Herb Rich; Sugar Maple-Basswood Leatherwood; Sugar Maple-White Birch-Trembling Aspen-Red Maple-Balsam fir Shrub; Trembling Aspen-Balsam Poplar-Speckled Alder; Trembling Aspen-White Birch-White Spruce-Dwarf Raspberry; Trembling Aspen-White Birch-White Spruce-White Pine-Red Pine-Beaked Hazel-Mountain Maple; White Pine-White Birch-Red Oak-Largetooth Aspen-Bracken Fern; Largetooth Aspen-White Pine-Red Oak-Red Maple-Blueberry-Wintergreen; White Pine-Red Pine-Beaked Hazel-Bracken Fern-Bush Honeysuckle; Red Pine-White Pine-Jack Pine-Largetooth Aspen-White Pine Shrub-Wintergreen; and Black Spruce-Tamarack-Labrador Tea-Sphagnum.

There are 62 non-forest ecosystems identified within QEW. These include terrestrial, wetland, and aquatic non-forest ecosystems. Approximately 12 taxa of rare plants have been found within the park. Further, 21 Atlantic Coastal Plain (ACP) vascular plant species are located in the study area. There have been eight rare vascular plant communities identified.

5.3.2 Fauna

Herpetiles

To date, 13 amphibian and 12 reptile species have been identified in the park and immediate surrounding area. Table 3 lists the identified species.

Table 3 ~ Herpetiles found within QEW

Common Name	Scientific name
Red-spotted Newt	*Notophthalmus viridescens viridenscens*
Jefferson-Blue-spotted Salamander Complex	*Ambystoma jerresonianum-laterale comples*
Northern Redback Salamander	*Plethodon cinerius*
Bullfrog	*Rana catesbeiana*
Green Frog	*Rana clamitaans melonota*
Pickerel Frog	*Rana palustris*
Northern Leopard Frog	*Rana pipiens*
Mink Frog	*Rana septentrionalis*
Wood Frog	*Rana sylvatica*
Eastern American Toad	*Bufo americanus americanus*
Gray Treefrog	*Hyla versicolor*
Northern Spring Peeper	*Pseudacris crucifer crucifer*
Western Chorus Frog	*Pseudacris triseriata*
Common Snapping Turtle	*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*
Midland Painted Turtle	*Chrysemys picta marginata*
Spotted Turtle	*Clemmys guttata*
Blanding's Turtle	*Emydoidea blandingii*
Five-lined Skink	*Eumeces Fasciatus*
Northern Ringneck Snake	*Diadaphis punctatus edwardsi*
Eastern Hognose Snake	*Heterodon platirhinos*
Northern Water Snake	*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*
Smooth Green Snake	*Liochlorophis vernalis*
Northern Redbelly Snake	*Storeria occipitomaculata occipitomaculata*
Northern Ribbon Snake	*Thamnophis sauritis septentrionalis*
Eastern Garter Snake	*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*

All the species of frogs, with the exception of Pickerel and Western Chorus Frogs, are commonly found in the study area. Common Snapping and Midland Painted turtles are the most frequently

seen turtles. With the exception of the Eastern Garter snake, snakes are infrequently found at the park.

Of the herpetile species found in the park the Spotted Turtle, Blanding's Turtle, Five-lined Skink, Eastern Hognose Snake and the Northern Ribbon Snake are all designated as S3 (provincially rare or uncommon). Within these species, all but the Northern Ribbon Snake are also classified as species of Special Concern by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada).

Birds

To date there have been 117 species of birds observed in Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands. Despite the large number of wetlands found in the park, ducks, shorebirds and other wetland birds are relatively uncommon. Nine species of diurnal raptors (occurring in the daytime) have been recorded, but only one owl species is known in the area. Some of the least encountered birds were American Bittern, Least Bittern, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Sora, Black Tern, Black-billed Cuckoo, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Goldenwinged Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Field Sparrow, and Indigo Bunting. There are six species found in the or near the park that are provincially rare (Table 4).

Table 4 ~ Provincially Rare Bird Species in QEW

Common Name	Scientific Name	MNR Rank	COSEWIC RANK	Breeding Status
Least Bittern[1]	*Ixobrychus exilis*	VUL	THR	Possible
Red-shouldered Hawk[1]	*Buteo lineatus*	VUL	SC	Confirmed
Black Tern[1]	*Chlidonias niger*	VUL		Probable
Red-headed Woodpecker	*Melanerpes carolinus*	VUL	SC	Confirmed
Eastern Loggerhead Shrike	*Lanius ludovicianus ssp. Migrans*	END	END	Confirmed
Cerulean Warbler	*Dendroica cerulea*	VUL	SC	Possible

[1]Species has been found within the park Source: Korol, 2003

There are 23 bird species known to breed in the park, and there is evidence of probable breeding by several others. The species breeding in the park include: Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Red-winged Blackbird. There is an active Great Blue Heron Rookery on Cranberry Lake. Cranberry Lake is not in the park, but the park does completely surround it.

Mammals

There have been 17 species of mammals recorded within QEW (Table 5).

Table 5 ~ Mammals Identified in QEW

Common Name	Scientific Name
Northern Short-tailed Shrew	*Blarina brevicauda*
Water shrew	*Sorex palustris*
Hairy-tailed Mole	*Parascalops breweri*
Black Bear	*Ursus americanus*
Raccoon	*Procyon lotor*
Mink	*Mustela vison*
Coyote	*Canis latrans*
Lynx	*Lynx canadensis*

Eastern chipmunk	*Tamias striatus*
Red squirrel	*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*
Beaver	*Castor canadensis*
Muskrat	*Ondatra zibethicus*
White-footed or Deer Mouse	*Peromyscus leucopus or P. maniculatus*
Porcupine	*Erethizon dorsatum*
Moose	*Alces alces*
White-tailed deer	*Odocoileius virginianus*

In addition, there are 34 mammals whose range overlaps the park, but have not yet been recorded within its boundaries. None of the species found at the park are designated as species at risk or provincially rare.

Documented winter deer yard areas include: Black River in Ragged Rapids Area; the Southwest corner of Digby Township; the eastern half of Digby into Lutterworth stretching along the Victoria/Haliburton County boundary from south of Moore Lake (outside of park boundary) to Sheldon Lake; and a string of smaller yard areas along rivers and lakes between Fishog and Victoria Lake.

Moose and deer hunting are popular activities in the park. There are 62 hunt camps located within park boundaries as well as several fly-in camps. Waterfowl hunting is not popular but evidence of its activity has been found in Green's Marsh, Smudge Creek, the northern end of Head Lake, and Hunter's Lake. There are six Bear Management Areas, fifteen registered traplines, and fourteen bait fish harvest areas within the park (See Figures 5, 6 and 7) (Heidorn, 2001).

Invertebrates.

Korol (2003) lists 29 species of butterflies and 34 species of dragonflies identified in the park. Seven odonates, including Common Sanddragon (S1), and one butterfly found within the park are provincially rare. Further study is needed to achieve a proper understanding of the invertebrates in the park and to prepare a complete checklist.

Fish

Most of the lakes within the park exhibit warm water environments (MNR, 1998a, 1998b). The upper section of the Black River has been stocked with rainbow trout in the past. More recently the river has been stocked with brook trout. Sheldon and Devil's Lake are stocked almost annually with lake trout. Smudge Lake is stocked every two years with splake. Largemouth Bass can be found in Smudge, Head, Clear, Cranberry, Red Boat, Crooked, Logan, Wolf, Victoria, Jordans, Little Gull, Black, Coburn, Devils, and Rainy Lakes. Smallmouth bass have been identified in the same lakes as Largemouth Bass, as well as in Fishog, Sheldon, and Scrabble Lakes. Walleye are in Head Lake. Muskellunge are in Head Lake and Fishog Lake. Brook Trout inhabit Lake #46. Sheldon, Devils, Little Gull, and Black Lakes hold Lake Trout. Lastly, Rainbow Trout can be found in Little Gull and Victoria Lakes.

5.3.3 Significant Features

QEW contains a number of significant wetland complexes (Figure 3). Lewisham Wetland provides a diverse array of wetland types, including aquatic floating-leaved emergents, deep emergent marsh with sedge tussocks, open fen communities on floating organic mats, extensive low graminoid marshes, tall shrub-rich marshes, Leatherleaf shrub bog, Virginia Chain Fern poor fen, Alder thicket swamp, Tamarack and Black Spruce treed poor fens, and Red Maple – Yellow Birch swamp forest. The wetland is approximately 640 hectares is size, 85 per cent of which falls within park boundaries (Figure 3). Lewisham Wetland is also significant as it contributes to the

FIGURE 5 BEAR MANAGEMENT AREAS

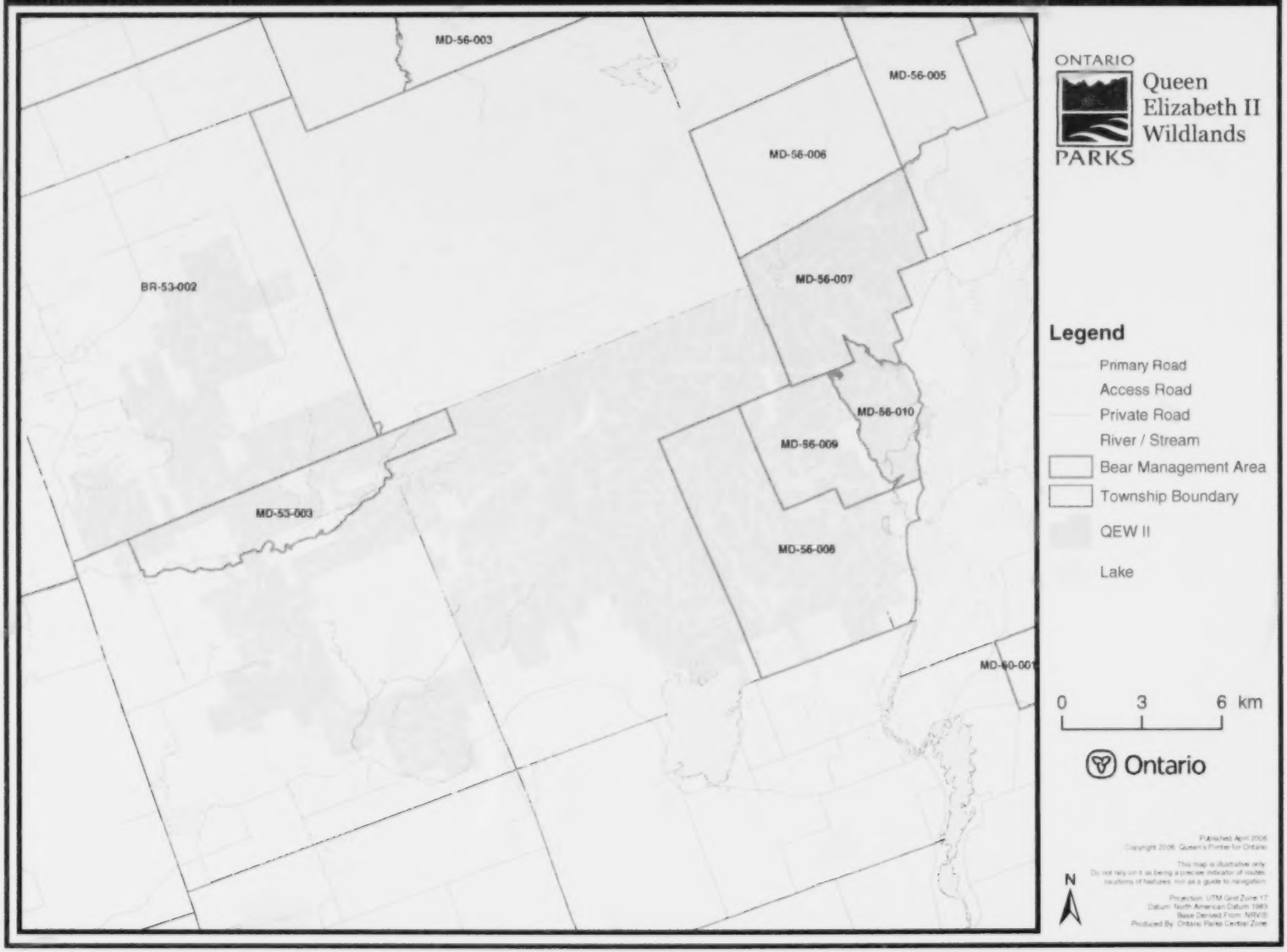


FIGURE 6

TRAPPING AREAS

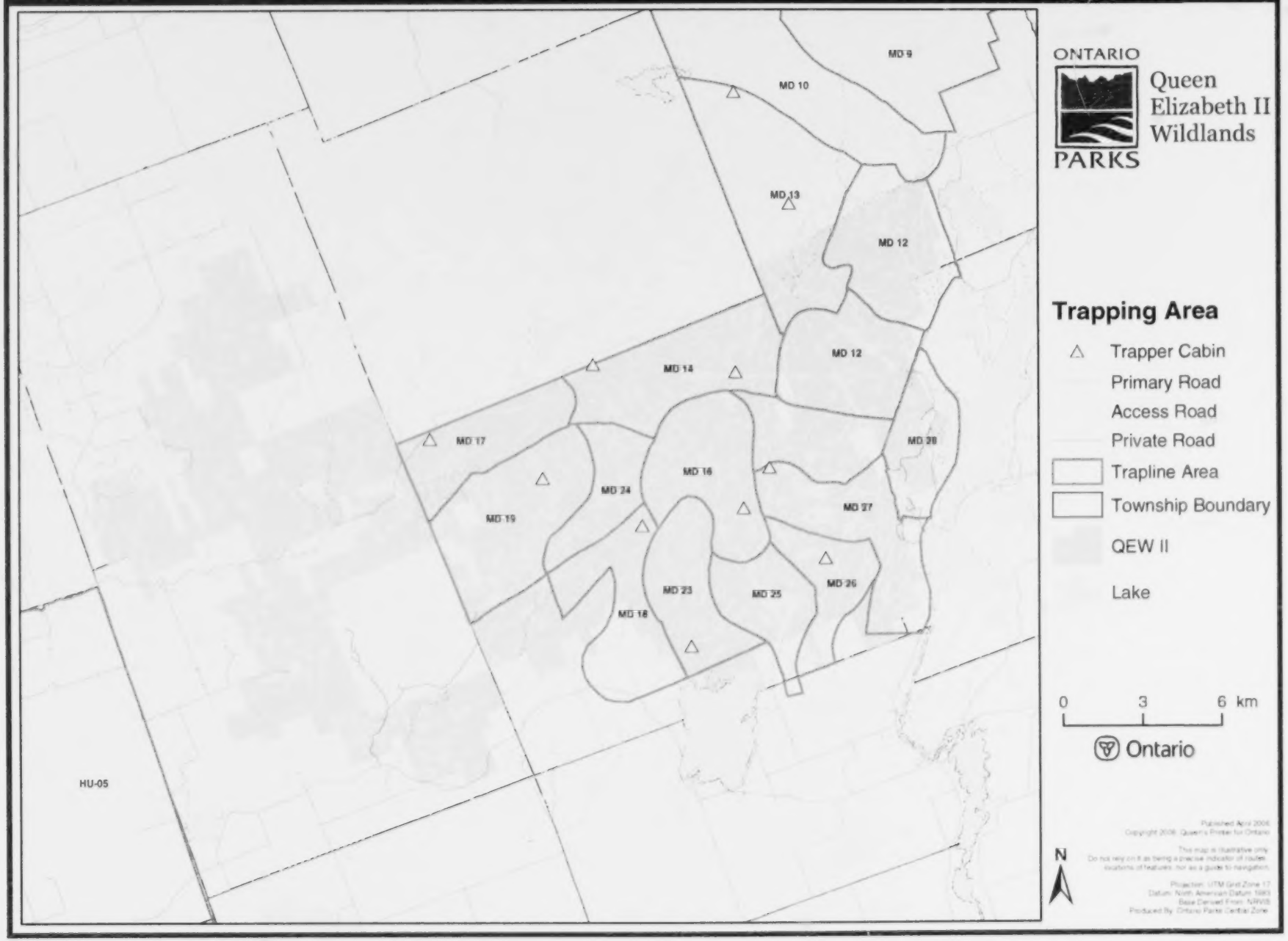
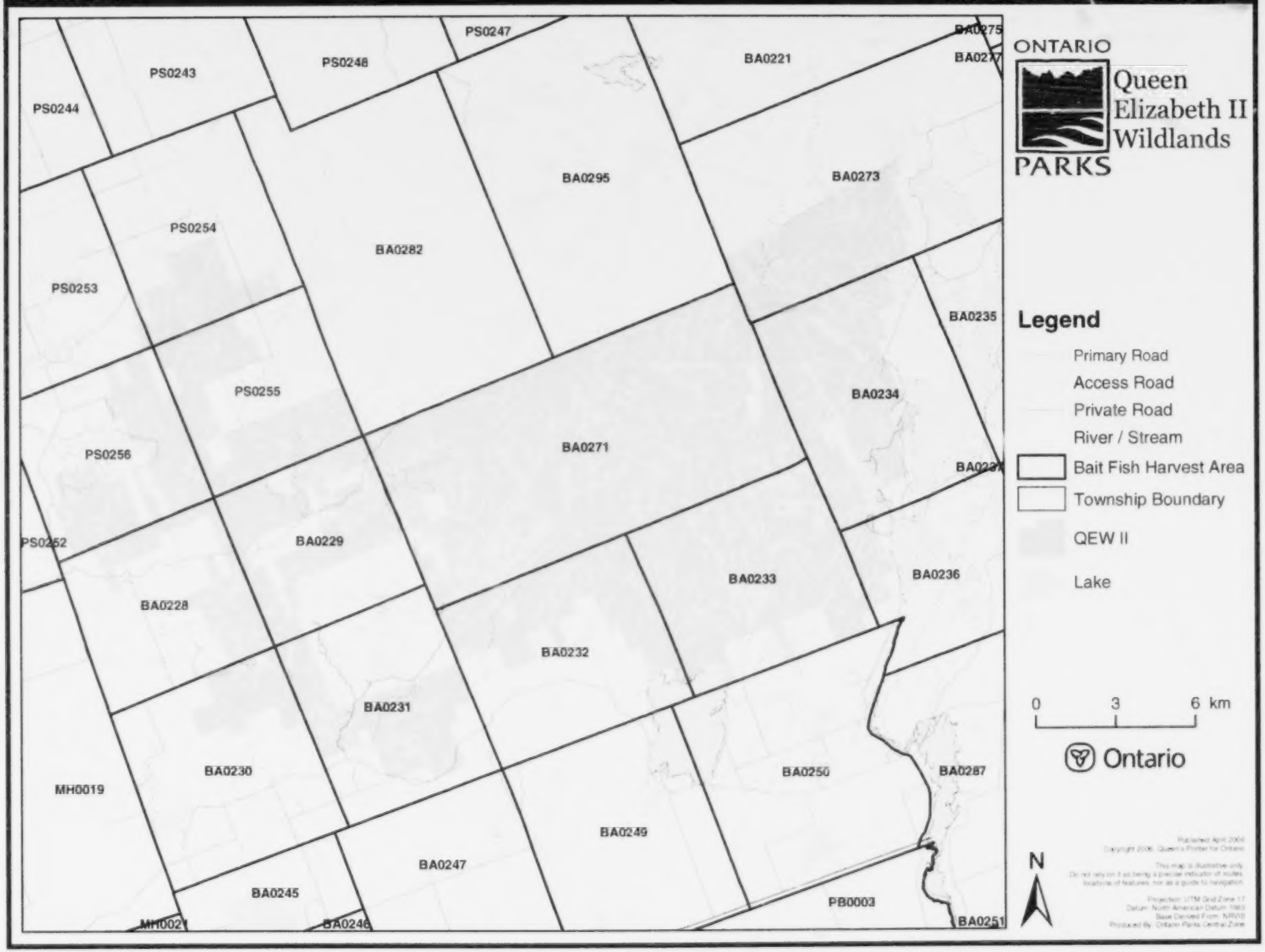


FIGURE 7

BAIT FISH HARVEST AREAS



regional hydrological system by acting as a headwater and major water storage area for Riley Creek and two other tributaries of the Black River. It is one of the largest contiguous wetlands identified in Muskoka. This wetland has been designated as a Muskoka Heritage Area.

The Riley Lake Barrens is also a Muskoka Heritage Area. It is approximately 384 ha in size, 85 per cent of which is within QEW. The Riley Lake Barrens is an excellent example of gneissic bedrock ridges separated by narrow linear wetlands. Its interior has little disturbance, providing habitat for a number of species, some of which are considered rare or uncommon (Reid & Bergsma, 1993).

Riley Lake South is another area with significance. It is dominated by low-lying, saturated areas, and beaver ponds. Provincially rare, regionally rare, and uncommon vascular plant species have been found within the lake complex. Significant birds, mammal, and butterfly species have also been documented in the area.

The Sadowa Marsh has not yet been surveyed in detail, however preliminary inspections indicate the marsh contains several wetland vegetation types and provincially rare nesting birds. The marsh is in its natural condition but the surrounding uplands are regenerating from former logging. There are no structural developments (i.e. roads, buildings, etc.) within the site. It is also the headwaters of a minor watershed system (Brunton, 1991).

The Dalton Black Ash wetland also falls within park boundaries. This site is Black Ash dominated with an early succession deciduous swamp forest, an undergrowth of Speckled Alder shrubbery, and scattered White Birch and Red Maple trees. The site occurs within a shallow bedrock depression in the Head River watershed. The Dalton Black Ash wetland is significant because such relatively large, mature examples of this forest vegetation are rare in Site District (ecodistrict) 5E-8 (Brunton, 1993 cited in NHIC, 2005).

5.4 Cultural Resources

To date there has been no evidence of aboriginal pre-contact use of the areas within the park. However the potential for encountering sites relating to the Late Woodland Period are high. The proximity of large Huron populations particularly to the south of the park suggests that sites could be identified through a systematic survey of the park area. Because of site limitations (i.e. the relatively infertile and rugged terrain) it is unlikely that village sites would be found. However, it is likely that the Hurons did use the area for fishing, hunting, and gathering nuts and berries.

In addition to the Huron use of the area, it is likely that Algonquian bands living in the southern shield region at least travelled through the park region. Evidence of Algonquian occupation is documented in the Haliburton region to the north-east and in Muskoka to the north-west suggests that Algonquian sites will occur most likely in the northern portions of the park.

Aboriginal use of the area continued throughout the settlement period. The Muskuokie or Yellowhead band was one of the three signatories to the land surrender agreement signed in 1818 that surrendered the lands now within the park. Following the land surrender the band purchased the Rama Reserve in 1832, and continued to hunt and fish in the area into the 20th century.

The southern townships of Victoria County (now the City of Kawartha Lakes) were opened up to settlement in the 1830s, although the county was not officially created until 1851. The "northern" townships Dalton, Digby and Ryde were added in 1858 in a response to continued demand for land for new settlers. These areas, however, were never heavily populated due to the rugged terrain.

Colonization roads were constructed in the 1800s to encourage settlement of areas of Central Ontario as the Crown lands available in Southern Ontario became settled. A number of these roads existed in and near the park. The Victoria Colonization Road, currently named Victoria Road, was built between 1858 and 1861. The original road ran from Glenarm in the south, to Peterson Road which ran along the northern boundary of Longford Township in the District of Muskoka. The section of the road that ran through the present day park, (the portion north of Uphill) was closed due to the constant need for repairs to the road and bridges. This section, however, is still legally a municipal road and is therefore not part of the park. The Monck Colonization Road, currently Monck Road (County Road 45) runs along the southern edge of the park. It was built between 1866 and 1873 to join Orillia and Bancroft.

The areas around the park were heavily logged in the 1800's but the rock barrens, combined with extensive wetland areas in the park area, provided limited lumber potential. Longford Township to the north was heavily logged, and the logs were floated down the Black River to mills. It is reported that many of the chronic problems with bridges on the Victoria Colonization Road were due, in part, to log jams coming down the Black River and its tributaries. On the east side of the park, square timbers came down to Fishog Lake and were then hauled to the Gull River via Head Lake. At that time Sadowa and Ragged Rapids served as post offices, and a general store was operated out of Cooper's Falls. A logging camp is known to have existed on Crooked Lake.

Settlement in the northern township boomed for a while, but was largely fuelled by the lumber industry. Logging activities continued until the early 1900s and the last log drive on the Black River was around 1928. Limited logging continued in small areas near the Black River until the early 1940s. As the supply of lumber declined, settlers were forced to rely entirely on their farms for their livelihood. Because of the poor, shallow soils and large areas of rock barrens, interspersed with large wetlands in the region, many of the farms were abandoned. Although no abandoned farmsteads have been documented within the park boundaries, an old farm can still be found on Lot 8 Concession 10 in Dalton Township.

Many of the small towns that existed in the logging era disappeared as well. Lewisham in Ryde and Darmoor, Sadowa, and Ragged Rapids in Dalton no longer exist. The only village that still exists today is Uphill in Dalton Township, just outside the park boundaries. Only a few houses remain in the community that once supported a post office, two stores, and a tavern.

Mineral exploration began in the 1800s but was concentrated near Moore Lake and Miners Bay to the east of the park. A molybdenum mine was reportedly located in Lot 16 Concession 7, Digby Township in 1910, but was not found by investigators in 1984.

6.0 MARKET ANALYSIS

As a large, non-operating park, it is difficult to account for all the uses that occur in QEW. However during site visits, major park uses were noted as camping, hunting, snowmobiling, ATV riding, 4x4 off-roading and hiking.

Camping is most popular during the summer months and especially on long weekends. An estimate of the number of campers in the area of Victoria Falls was approximated from 300 to 400 people during one weekend. Campers generally stay for short visits; there are no services or facilities for them to use which may keep their stays to a minimum. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many campers who come to QEW are young people and use the area as a traditional "party" location. Other groups of campers may stay in the park as part of a canoe or hiking route. The park could potentially offer interior camping, making it the southern most park with this option.

Hunting and fishing also occur frequently in the park. The park contains a number of hunt camps and several fly-in camps. Generally, hunters will be using the park during specific periods of the year; they will be most active around several hunting seasons (e.g. moose, dear, waterfowl, etc.). There are 62 hunt camps located within the park and, assuming each hunt group has a size of

two or more members, hunting accounts for a significant number of users within the park. There is a fishing lodge with several cabins located on Crooked Lake, and several other fly-in fishing camps. The entire fishery is closed during the winter, but some ice fishing may nonetheless be taking place. The number of anglers using the park area is unknown, as are the number and type of fish taken.

Several well established and maintained snowmobile trails exist in the park and have been in use for at least 20 years. Although the exact number of riders using these trails has not been documented, the local snowmobile associations have many thousands of members, and it is known that the trails are popular and are used heavily.

While the above examples do not include all the uses within the park, they do show that QEW is used by visitors throughout the year. The park provides a unique wilderness experience that is virtually unmatched by any other area this far south; other provincial parks, such as Balsam Lake, provide camping and day-use opportunities for visitors, but in a relatively controlled setting. The park complements nearby campgrounds by providing a unique environment which can easily be reached for day-trips. QEW is approximately 200 km from the Toronto area.

7.0 CONSTRAINTS AND CAPABILITIES

The park is the largest undisturbed tract of wilderness in south-central Ontario within easy reach of major urban areas in Southern Ontario. It offers a unique opportunity for those seeking a scenic, rugged, solitary wilderness experience. However, it is not likely that the park will attract great number of visitors due to the lack of road access to much of the site and its rugged interior terrain. The park also lacks any developed facilities which limit the length of time most people are likely to spend at the park.

The park contains a variety of features and values limiting facility development and intensive recreational use, including a number of sites of distinct ecological value, habitat that supports rare species, and extensive areas of shallow soils. Drainage, topography, access, and financial and human resources (e.g. enforcement capacity) are also key considerations. Climate change, and its potential to affect temperature and precipitation patterns, lake levels and temperatures, forest health, soil moisture, and flora and fauna, has implications of resource management and recreational uses. Other factors, such as the "threshold wilderness concept", are more abstract, but are equally important in an analysis of constraints and capabilities.

8.0 ISSUES

The following is a preliminary list of issues that may be addressed through the management planning process. Additional issues may be identified for consideration during subsequent stages of the planning process. The next stage of the process will involve a more detailed description and consideration of a range of issues, and the production of a document that will present alternative policy options for each. The following is a list of preliminary issues:

1) Zones
Ontario Parks assigns different zones to all portions of a park. Zones help control the types of activities allowed in a given area within the park and ensure that significant features are not compromised by continued use of the park. Existing cottages, trails, and hunting areas will need to be considered when zoning is initiated.

2) Park Boundary Delineation
The boundary of the park is not easily discernable. Within the park are portions of privately owned land. Private land and the park's irregular boundaries make it very difficult to mark the park boundary in any way.

3) Access into the Park
There is no clearly defined park gate or main entrance for visitors to identify as they enter the park, and as mentioned above the boundaries are not clearly delineated. Some roads are private and others are closed during the winter and spring melts.

4) Hunting with dogs off lead
Ontario Parks' policy is to have dogs on a lead no more than two metres in length, unless in a specified pet exercise area. Hunters, who are allowed to hunt within the park, may use dogs off their lead when hunting. This could lead to conflicts with other recreationists.

5) User Conflict
Different user groups may conflict with one another. For example, it may be dangerous to go hiking in the park during hunting season. Other conflicts may include ATV users who disrupt the quiet of the park, impacting other recreationists.

6) ATVs and 4x4 off road vehicles
ATVs and 4x4 off road vehicles can cause damage to sensitive plant communities, increase soil erosion, and increase the footprint of trails. The use of ATVs and 4x4s in the park will be further examined in the Management Options report.

7) Boat Caches
Boat caches require a LUP in order to be within the park. Traditionally, some cottagers have used boats in order to gain access to their cottages. Many of these caches may not have been issued a LUP in the past and cottagers may not see the need to do so now.

8) Campground Development
Sections 3.1 and 3.2 discussed the various campsites that can be found throughout the park. These campsites were not planned and thus are placed where they are most convenient for users (e.g. near water, close to roads, etc.) The placements of the current campsites are severely impacting the environment and wildlife. Future planning will determine whether these campsites will remain where they are currently situated, if they will be closed and rehabilitated, or if new campsites will be constructed in more appropriate locations.

9) Can and Bottle Ban
Litter is a large problem surrounding the campsites at QEW. Most campers seem to leave their litter at the site instead of removing it when they leave. A large quantity of glass from broken bottles is scattered over the rocks at Victoria Falls. Broken glass is dangerous to all park users, as well as pets and wildlife. A can and bottle ban would prohibit cans and bottles from being brought into the park. Other parks with interior camping have this policy in place. For example, all non burnable, disposable food and beverage containers and eating containers (e.g. glass) are prohibited in all interior areas of Algonquin Park. Recyclable metal beverage containers (e.g. cans) are banned, but not containers designed specifically for repeated use. Containers of medicine, insect repellent, fuel or other items that are not food or beverages are permitted.

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Comment Sheet

Your comments on the Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park Background Information Document are welcome and will be considered in the development of the Park Management Plan. Thank you for taking the time to complete this comment sheet.

Please direct your questions and comments to: **Hank van Luit**
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451 Arrowhead Park Road
Huntsville ON P1H 2J4
Phone: (705) 789-1481
Fax: (705) 789-5948

Comments must be returned by: **JUNE 30, 2006**

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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Phone #: _____

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Please check the appropriate box below.

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Comments

Comments (continued)

Comments and personal information regarding this park management planning process are collected under the authority of the *Provincial Parks Act* to assist MNR in making decisions and to determine further public consultation needs relating to future park development. Comments and opinions which do not constitute personal information as defined by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, will be shared within the MNR and may be included in documentation that is made available for public review. Personal information will remain confidential unless prior consent to disclose is obtained. However, this information may be used by the MNR to seek public input on other resource management surveys and projects. For further information regarding this Act, please contact the Strategic Planning Officer at 705-755-1773.

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